

The Office of American Spaces

2017
Annual
Report



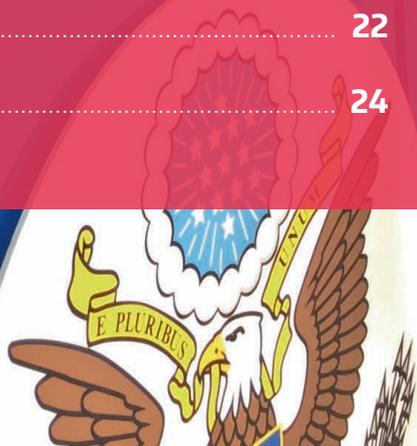
United States Department of State
Bureau of International Information Programs





Contents

- Our Mission 1
- 2017: Taking a Broader View of Partnerships 2
- 2018 and Beyond: Empowering Achievement
Through the Power of Networks 14
- 2017 Office of American Spaces Budget 18
- 2017 American Spaces Statistics 22
- American Spaces in Pictures 24



Our Mission

The Office of American Spaces develops and supports modern, effective physical platforms for public diplomacy engagement with foreign targeted audiences in support of United States foreign policy objectives.

The Washington-based Office of American Spaces in the Bureau of International Information Programs provides oversight, training and funding to support more than 650 American Spaces worldwide. It is home to the Foreign Service Specialist corps of 24 Regional Public Engagement Specialists around the world who link American Spaces, embassies and consulates with technical, programming and other support within IIP and provide direct guidance to American Spaces. The office has 18 staff members in Washington and four in Vienna, Austria.

“The Partnerships That Enable Face-to-Face Communication and Safe Places for Expression Around the World”

On the cover: Programming on civic engagement and human rights, such as the U.S. civil rights movement, captivate young audiences at American Spaces around the world. Students at the Pakistan America Friendship Reading Room Skardu in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, view a video about the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr. and his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

Inside cover: Black History Month programs provide opportunities for young people to express their own dreams for the future. A student from the University of Kara recites a poem about her dream during Black History Month at the American Corner Kara in Togo.

2017 A New Strategic Approach

Taking a Broader View of Partnerships

Integrating Multiple Resources to Achieve Policy Goals

Partnerships are the heart of American Spaces. Without partnerships, 17-year-old Aruzhan Koshkarova of Almaty, Kazakhstan, would not have had the chance to develop QamCare, a GPS app that gives directions, and warns loved ones if the user is in danger. She and the Girls Tech Team from the Chevron-sponsored Makerspace at the Almaty American Space would not have defeated over 100 clubs from around the world to be one of only six senior teams invited to pitch at Technovation's World Pitch Summit in Silicon Valley – and win first place (Please see photo of the Girls Tech Team on page 13).

As predicted in the 2016 Office of American Spaces annual report, 2017 was a year of expanding partnerships of all types. The office took major steps to achieve significant inroads in this area, while encouraging American Spaces and the embassies and consulates that oversee them to do the same. A number of successful outcomes have resulted, and

many of those are highlighted in this report. Partnerships come in all forms – shopping malls, universities, city halls and other American Corner hosts; binational centers; private-sector sponsorships; interagency and intra-agency partnerships (also known as “whole of mission” because many agencies reside at the embassy); integrated programming partnerships among American Spaces and more.

Without partnerships, it would not be possible for the United States to have a global network of American Spaces that serve as safe places for connection, expression, exploration and self-discovery – places that convey a positive American spirit and where all – including locally underrepresented groups, such as women, girls, ethnic minorities and the LGBT community – feel welcome.

Partnerships also represent a way of thinking strategically about the integration of multiple resources across a network of American Spaces, such as programs that can be conducted virtually to extend the reach of a workforce development course or a business development webinar.

Increased Programming Support for American Spaces

Programs “in a Box”

In 2017, the Office of American Spaces significantly expanded its programmatic support to assist embassies and American Spaces in developing strategic programming. A number of “kits” or “programs in a box” have been developed that package a range of content into easy-to-use programs. These programs are available on the American Spaces Website.

The Office of American Spaces also began collaborating with the Office of Written Content to develop downloadable posters tailored for American Spaces. A “catalog” showing thumbnail images of each poster and links to various resolutions and languages, has been created on the American Spaces website to provide a single, dedicated location.



Students participate in a town debate contest at the Isfara, Tajikistan, American Space, which is a partner-hosted American Corner.

Of the over 650 American Spaces in 141 countries around the world, 84% are hosted and primarily operated by in-country partner institutions.



In 2017, the number of visitors to American Spaces increased by 32% to exceed 58 million.



In 2017, American Spaces increased the number of programs they offered by 67%.



In 2017, the number of people attending American Spaces programs increased by 105% to over 43 million.



Partnering with Host Country Institutions The Backbone of American Spaces

The term "American Spaces" describes a mix of partner-hosted "American Corners," independent "Binational Centers" and U.S. government-operated "American Centers."

American Corners, the most prevalent type, are hosted by "partner institutions," such as universities, non-government organizations, local government organizations, public libraries, local businesses and more. Binational Centers are independent organizations founded indigenously to foster strong relationships with the United States. Primarily located in Latin America, where they have strong historic roots, they double as highly effective American Spaces.

By providing space and other support, American Corners and Binational Centers – about 84 percent of American Spaces – enable embassies and consulates to provide their communities free access to information resources, technology and an increasing range of training and other programs to advance objectives of empowerment, peace and prosperity. As such, they represent a powerful, yet highly cost-effective public diplomacy investment.

Partnering across the U.S. Foreign Affairs Agencies

Getting the “Whole of Government” Involved

Embassies typically include representatives from many U.S. government agencies. In 2017, the Office of American Spaces made a concerted effort to reach out beyond the Department of State to the other U.S. government foreign affairs agencies to offer the capabilities and community awareness of the American Spaces network to support the missions of those agencies.’ missions. This makes more efficient use of U.S. government resources.

For example, the Office of American Spaces has developed a relationship with Voice of America, which provides its “Let’s Learn English” program on AmericanSpaces.state.gov. VOA informs the office when its trainers are traveling and available to visit American Spaces. The VOA Ukrainian Service developed a video series tailored to the Windows on America (American Spaces) in Ukraine. American Spaces are available for events or public display to other agencies, such as USAID, Foreign Agriculture Service, Foreign Commercial Service, the Peace Corps and others.

Partnering with the Private-Sector Advancing U.S. Public Diplomacy and Commercial Interests

In addition to their capabilities as whole-of-government resources, American Spaces are in a prime position to advance U.S. commercial and technology interests. The target audience for American Spaces is also an important market for U.S. business. These common interests point to clear opportunities for public-private partnerships.

For the private sector, American Spaces offer global reach and credibility that can meet awareness-building, market-access and talent-recruiting needs of American

corporations. The private sector can offer valuable support to American Spaces through donations of technology, funding of co-branded programming or general financial support. The Office of American Spaces is focusing on three major areas in which American Spaces can benefit private partners:

- demonstration of emerging technologies
- workforce development (skills training)
- corporate social responsibility

In July and September 2017, the Office of American Spaces conducted two roundtable discussions with potential private sector partners in Washington and in Silicon Valley, California. Each event drew firms representing a cross-section of disciplines. Separately, the Office of American Spaces met with Microsoft regarding its virtual reality platform and is working with the University of Southern California Center on Public Diplomacy, the Newseum and virtual reality industry leaders to explore VR applications to public diplomacy.

“ In today’s complex world, no one company or government can go alone to develop our societies – we need each other as partners, building on our collective knowledge and expertise to achieve the impact. MakerSpace (Almaty) – a collaboration between the embassy, Kazakhstani organizations and business - is yet another example of a truly successful project built from the foundations of mutual trust, understanding and cooperation where people work together focused on common goals to create value.”

– Leila Aitmukhanova
Project Director
Social Responsibility Branch
Chevron Kazakhstan

Promoting STEM Takes Flight in Jakarta Public-Private Partnership

Promoting market access for U.S. technology and security cooperation with Indonesia, through a public-private partnership with Lockheed Martin, @america, Jakarta's American Center in a public mall, featured an F-16 flight simulator.

More than 6,000 people attended the events, which showcased U.S. technology and exports and highlighted U.S. education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Prior to the event, the embassy's Office of Defense Cooperation identified staff with aviation experience who spoke to 400 students in area schools. In addition, Indonesia's Institute Teknologi Bandung, a leading engineering school, broadcast a promotional event in American Corners across the country.

Social Entrepreneurship Incubator Hosts American Space in Nigeria

In May 2017, Nigeria's first priority American Space opened in the Co-Creation Hub (CcHUB), a Lagos-based business incubator focused on "social entrepreneur" startups working to solve compelling social issues. The space, equipped with digital technology, is a center for Nigerians to develop innovative ideas, learn about the United States, explore possible study at U.S. universities, enjoy U.S. cultural programs and interact with U.S. exchange program alumni.

The CcHUB includes a Makerspace with a tech area designed for digital skills building, a workshop with laptops and tablets, conversation spaces for small meetings and research and a meeting space for innovation and creative collaboration. The CcHUB serves as a hub for programming across Nigeria's network of American Corners.

@america has attracted private-sector partnerships due to the visibility and exposure it provides to Indonesian youth. @america averages over 600 visitors per program day.





American Center Jerusalem Promotes Economic Inclusion Through Public-Private Partnerships

American Center Jerusalem, in partnership with Israeli nongovernment organization, Shecodes, and several private companies, hosted an all-night hackathon in April 2017 for approximately 80 women and girls, who competed in teams to finish a series of cyber security coding challenges over a 27-hour period.

Israel has been called the “start-up nation,” with Tel Aviv as its “start-up capital.” Coding and other high-tech skills in Israel are indispensable to gaining access to high-tech jobs and, ultimately, to a social network that is international, pluralistic and open to diversity.

STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programming at American Center Jerusalem advances gender equality and diversity for Arab, secular and religious Jewish women within the high-tech labor market; helps create opportunities for women and girls in the high-tech sector; and helps change community attitudes and advance shared American and Israeli democratic values.

Sponsors of the event included five U.S. firms -- Palo Alto, Google, Sandisk, enSilo and IBM -- and featured graduates of Shecodes and other American Center Jerusalem technology workshops. Shecodes is a community of women established in 2014 with the goal of ensuring that women represent 50 percent of software developers in the Israeli high-tech industry.



The training facilities in Vienna, Austria, now reflect the image of a typical American Space.

2017 Training: Meeting Diverse Needs of American Spaces Staff

Staying Relevant as Priorities Shift

Training for American Spaces staff in 2017 evolved based on diverse requirements of staff around the world. Eight introductory (PY351) courses included six in Vienna, Austria; one in Nepal for staff from high-threat areas; and one in Mexico City focused on BNC partnerships. Nepal participants included staff from Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Iraq, Nepal and Pakistan.

Two advanced (PY352) courses were held in Vienna, including a new course for staff who manage country-wide networks of American Spaces. The focus was on concepts, skills and inspiration for developing and using networks to serve U.S. foreign policy interests.

Of the more than 1600 people who work in American Spaces, nearly 900 have participated since the inception of a global training program in 2015.

“The American Spaces Treatment”

The Vienna, Austria, space used for a wide range of International Information Programs training recently received extensive upgrades in appearance in addition to a new room and other amenities aimed at making the training experience more comfortable, inspiring and reflective of an American Space. Innovations include putting QR codes on graphics, technology, furnishings and other equipment to help trainees better grasp the vision they are learning and acquire the materials they need to implement it.

Impact Video Challenge

An Opportunity for American Spaces to Shine

In August 2017, nearly 50 American Spaces accepted the challenge to submit 90-second videos showing how they make an impact. Among the objectives were to gain insight into how American Spaces perceive themselves as making an impact as well to provide them an opportunity for social media marketing. Judges included experts in digital communication and Office of American Spaces staff. Winners are posted on the American Spaces Website. (The full address is <https://americanspaces.state.gov/home/impact-video-challenge/>.)

Kant American Corner, Kyrgyzstan submitted a winning video in the Impact Video Challenge.



Partnering Across the State Department

Building on Success of American Spaces to Increase Impact

The Office of American Spaces has a long history of working closely with several offices in the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) responsible for English teaching, college student recruiting, U.S. cultural programs and maintaining contact with people who participated in U.S. exchange programs.

During 2017, the Office deepened collaboration with ECA. One example was using the digital connectivity across American Spaces networks to increase the reach of cultural performers ECA sends abroad, increasing the return on both programming and technology investments. The Office has been working on closer collaboration with ECA in areas such as access to MOOCs at American Spaces and interactive arts programs.

ECA also worked with American Spaces to provide access to films and television shows produced in the United States. American Spaces can choose from thousands of classic and contemporary titles to promote dialogue on core American policy priorities, such as rule of law, freedom of the press, women's rights, disability rights, religious freedom, human rights and more.

Consular Affairs

A new exciting area of cross-department partnership advanced in 2017 with the State Department's Consular Affairs Bureau. The bureau agreed to use American Spaces design concepts in consular waiting areas to provide visa customers with a more America-focused experience, while also taking advantage of the opportunity to expose them to public diplomacy messaging. This makes more efficient use of U.S. government facilities abroad, increases informational outreach to foreign audiences and provides visitors to U.S. embassies and consulates with a more inspiring user experience.

While Applying for a Visa, Peruvians Can (Virtually) Visit the U.S.

Providing an excellent example of cross-departmental partnership, the Lima embassy's consular and public affairs sections created the "V-Space," an interactive American Space in the consular waiting area. The more than 140,000 annual visa applicants will find a waiting area with the modern look and feel of an American Space, where interactive digital devices provide information about U.S. tourism, education, culture and business, as well as on U.S. government initiatives in Peru, including economic development, counternarcotics, security and democracy. This previously untapped public diplomacy audience can now enjoy the V-Space, a reference to the "virtual" environment and the "visa" process, while waiting for their visa interviews.





Integrated Program Builds Cross-Border Connections

Planting seeds for regional stability, Islamabad's American Center and the American Center in New Delhi held a virtual creative writing miniworkshop for eight high school students from Islamabad and New Delhi. For three weeks, the students worked in pairs, interacting via social media. Following the program, several Pakistani students said they most liked interacting with Indian students and learning they have few differences and share similar aspirations and stories. A Pakistani girl said she wasn't sure why there is tension between the two countries but said she believes her generation will be responsible for confronting and overcoming it. A Pakistani boy who sent a photo via Instagram of his Biryani meal to his new Indian friend said it was both surprising and comforting that the Indian boy knew exactly what he was eating.

Partnering Across the Network of American Spaces

Extending the Reach of Programs

American Spaces are spread around more than 140 countries, but they are not islands. Many, such as Brazil's binational centers, have historically functioned as networks, where programs are connected across many locations. In 2017, American Spaces were encouraged to develop strategic programs that increase outreach across multiple locations, using the excellent internet technology that many American Spaces have.

Integrating programs across multiple spaces is a natural extension of the broader advising role of Regional Public Engagement Specialists. The specialists not only provide guidance to American Spaces but to the embassy on how to make the most effective use of American Spaces using a broad set of public diplomacy resources.

An example of programming across borders is the "Sister Corner" partnership among American Spaces in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Nepal and Poland. The partnerships foster regional integration through joint virtual programs, such as discussion clubs, speakers and tours of each other's their home cities.

Strategy, Strategy, Strategy Themes for Integrated Programming

With partnerships as an example, the Office of American Spaces continued to encourage American Spaces and their embassies/consulates to use a range of IIP and Office of American Spaces programs, as well as other resources, to contribute to an overall strategy to meet specific objectives. By thinking holistically, posts can vastly increase the impact of their American Spaces on strategic goals. Examples of these strategic programs in American Spaces can be found in this report:

- Strengthening civil society
- Combating corruption
- Countering violent extremism and disinformation
- Preventing and responding to internal conflict, atrocities, and fragility
- Economic and social entrepreneurship
- Environmental conservation / Wildlife protection
- Human Rights (e.g., ethnic and religious minorities, women and girls, LGBTI, and people with disabilities)
- Rule of law / Good governance
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) advancement

American Center Moscow Encourages Cooperation and Interaction

Operating in one of the most restrictive public diplomacy environments in the world, American Center Moscow advances U.S. government strategy by supporting engagement on local issues important to Russians; seeking an improved business landscape, including for U.S. investors; and providing opportunities to interact with U.S. embassy staff.

Advancing U.S. business interests in Russia plays an important role in countering anti-Americanism. The American Center highlights U.S. investments and exports in non-sanctioned areas to encourage

business-to-business connections and promote ethical and accountable practices. Sustainable development in the Arctic, space exploration and global health are examples of shared interests.

The American Center also plays a key role as a place where young Russians can freely discuss professional and social issues affecting their daily lives.

Commenting on experiences at the American Center, a Russian university student said: “Visiting the American center gives me a great opportunity to plunge into American culture. It makes me happy that the Center is located on the territory of the embassy. Right off the street you are immersed in a little slice of America.”

Since 2015, American Center Moscow has hosted over 1,150 events and welcomed over 25,000 visitors.





Networking to End Gender-Based Violence

Working together closely, American Spaces in Sri Lanka and Maldives set up a series of workshops to raise awareness of the negative impacts associated with gender-based violence. American Spaces in Colombo, Kandy and Jaffna coordinated with other government agencies, nongovernment organizations and universities to set up workshops across the American Spaces network.

The close coordination among American Spaces ensured programs did not conflict, were appropriate and featured popular gender-based violence experts. In addition, the American Spaces used their wide network of contacts throughout the four American Spaces in Sri Lanka and Maldives to record 16 videos of men and women across the two countries speaking about this issue.

In Heavily Censored Turkmenistan, American Spaces Provide a Window to the World

In Turkmenistan, where many internet sites, including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, are blocked, the country's four American Spaces serve as the primary avenue for promoting U.S. perspectives, messages and values. Visitors to American Spaces can watch English- or Russian-language television, have uncensored

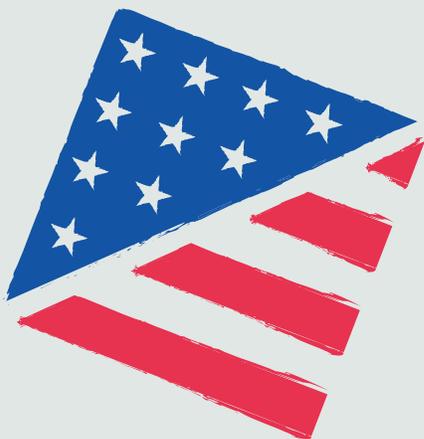
access to the internet and can download podcasts, listen to audiobooks and check out print materials. Few, if any, institutions in the country offer this range of uncensored, accurate information. The U.S. government-operated American Center in the capital of Ashgabat provides a venue to discuss such topics as elections, civil rights, freedom of speech, etc. and offers western magazines. Three partner-operated American Corners find many other ways to promote American culture, values and higher education.

For example, because no movie theaters are located outside Ashgabat, American Spaces are perhaps the only places to see licensed U.S. movies in the country. Each American Space screens at least one American movie per month, often one per week. Movies reinforce selected policy themes. In addition, to promote regional integration, the American Center holds conversation groups with American Corner Khujand, Tajikistan, providing many visitors with their first experiences speaking with peers in a neighboring country.

Finally, taking a whole-of-mission approach, each American officer is expected to speak at the American Center and one of the American Corners during the year, focusing on strategic themes of education, science and technology, professional development and entrepreneurship.



American Corner Mary, Turkmenistan



New American Spaces Website: The Place to Look First

Building Digital Resources

A vast range of resources for American Spaces are available on the upgraded [American Spaces Website](#), launched in FY 2017. The new resource platform provides a one-stop-shop for guidance, design resources and programmatic content specifically tailored for American Spaces. The site also includes the American Spaces Community Forum for anyone working with American Spaces to tap the power of the network through direct communication, sharing ideas and best practices, and answering each other's questions.

eLibraryUSA

New capabilities added to eLibraryUSA, traditionally an online database focused on academic research tools, vastly increases the programming value of this long-time Office of American Spaces resource. New items include access to more than 400 U.S. newspapers and magazines, including *The Atlantic*, *National Geographic*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Rolling Stone* and *Wired*. A section on digital literacy topics includes cyberbullying and privacy, and "opposing viewpoints"

offers all points of view on controversial issues from more than 1700 publications.

Finally, eLibraryUSA now offers two video streaming services, American History in Video is a collection of more than 600 videos. Kanopy is an Office of American Spaces-curated collection of 50-60 videos exploring American society and culture. Streaming services are for staff programming use only. eLibraryUSA represents a significant investment of resources in American Spaces.

American Spaces Branding

The Office of American Spaces upgraded the official American Spaces logo to reflect a more modern design. A new branding guide explains how the logo should be used. In addition, a new Global Network Banner was developed for display in American Spaces. The banner provides a means for American Spaces to promote that they are part of a large, global network.

Upgraded logo



Global Network Banner



URL for images: <https://americanspaces.state.gov/home/branding-resources-for-american-spaces/>



Innovative Partnership: American Space Almaty in Kazakhstan

The public-private partnership supporting American Space Almaty represents an ideal arrangement among a local commercial property developer, the American energy company Chevron and the U.S. government joining forces to create a state-of-the-art space for innovative and policy-relevant programs. Soon after American Space Almaty opened as an anchor tenant in a new creative arts and technology co-working space called “SmArt.Point” in the heart of the city, its attendance records were breaking. Community organizations and local businesses began lining up to partner with the American Space.

In this partnership, SmArt.Point provides 2500 square feet of rent-free space with a wall of windows to the outside, paid utilities and internet and two salaried staff positions. The embassy benefits from an accessible, visually stunning and technologically rich physical space in which to conduct its programs. SmArt.Point benefits from the public programs, professional and educational opportunities and access to American innovation and technology. Chevron, supporting technology-driven programs at the American Space, provides workforce training. Because it is community-driven and backed by both business and government, as well as highly attended, the Office of American Spaces believes the potential for sustainability of this partnership is high.



Botswana Residents Can See “America on the Move”

In a country where just 2.2 million people are spread across an area the size of France, which has 67 million, reaching most of the residents requires going to them. So the embassy is doing just that. A new mobile American Space called “America on the Move” now travels through the country to provide books, videos, lectures and other programs to increase community engagement and economic empowerment through education.

America on the Move offers mobile educational advising to students interested in U.S. colleges, STEM and tech workshops, English language teaching and a range of cultural and U.S. government exchange alumni programs. Low start-up costs, an expanded range of potential partners, increased flexibility to tailor programs and the ability to reach more participants add up to the right public diplomacy vehicle for delivering the embassy’s policy goals.

2018 and Beyond **Empowering Achievement Through the Power of Networks**



Building Affinity Through Direct Engagement in Morocco

Almost a second home for Moroccan youth in Casablanca, Dar America welcomes 5,000 visitors through its doors each month. To create lasting, cross-cultural ties, Dar America engages with youth through technology and U.S. culture, encouraging exploration, collaboration and innovation.

In the coming year, partnerships will play an even larger role in the operation of American Spaces – particularly partnerships among American Spaces. Embassies will be taking a more holistic view of their American Spaces and developing strategic plans for the most effective means of using their American Spaces networks as a whole to accomplish embassy or wider departmental policy objectives.

As a result, embassies are focusing on strengthening their American Spaces networks to conduct shared, coordinated programming in a hub and spoke system, in which a priority or “lead” American Space acts as a catalyst and enabler for other American Spaces and partners. An example is extending the reach and impact of a speaker or performing arts programs using technology-networked American Spaces.

“Whole of mission,” or interagency, partnerships and integrated programming that combines multiple public diplomacy resources will take on greater significance. One example is drawing on the huge interest in English language learning to foster debate events and clubs, through which young people learn language while also increasing their understanding of topical issues. Others examples:

- Increasing the use of American Spaces as places where participants in IIP-sponsored Tech Camps and ECA-sponsored exchange programs can build on knowledge and inspiration from those experiences
- Allowing Binational Centers in Latin America to be hubs for further development of the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLA) youth network
- Increasing the awareness of the over 500,000 members of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) network of how they can benefit from and contribute to American Spaces in Africa

Refining the Network

Embassies are expected to take a close look at the effectiveness of each American Space in their networks to determine whether it has the means to attract the target audiences and deliver high-level programming to meet policy goals. American Spaces should be active programmatic platforms that meet the vision of a modern American Space and reflect well on the U.S., in line with American Spaces standards. If other, less-demanding relationships are a better fit, the Office of American Spaces will assist embassies in establishing such a partnership, which would no longer be an “American Space,” but would allow embassies to maintain a relationship of their choosing.

New Process for Opening an American Space

To maintain the quality of the American Spaces network at a level that can be sustained and ensure that every American Space can meet the qualifications above, the Office of American Spaces is instituting a new application process for opening an American Space. The process ensures that only a limited number of highly compelling proposals will be approved. The application requires the embassy to provide a justification as well as a detailed profile of the potential partner.

The Office of American Spaces will approve only those applications showing a clear and convincing public diplomacy need for a new American Space. The office will consult with the regional bureaus in the evaluation of the application. The existing number of American Spaces in a country and the ratio of public diplomacy staff managing the network of American Spaces will be factored into the evaluation.

U.S. War Veteran Raises Ukrainian Public Health Awareness

America House Kyiv organized a series of events in Kyiv and Lviv to raise awareness about issues facing veterans in Ukraine among decision makers, health practitioners and combat survivors. The programs addressed the need for public health reform, including ways to address new health issues associated with conflict, a key policy goal.

Wounded Iraq War veteran Staff Sgt. Shilo Harris, accompanied by psychologist Jamie Panizza-Kimball, captivated an audience of over 2,000 Ukrainians (500 in person and 1,600 remote) during their visit. Harris shared his story of triumph over adversity, and Panizza-Kimball spoke about the important role of caregivers and family members in veteran rehabilitation. Their message focused on practical tools for living a full life after combat.

“Everything in life is a gift,” Harris said. “Sometimes it may not be the gift you want but you realize that your challenges are a new beginning.”



Staff Sgt. Shilo Harris, who was injured by an improvised explosive while serving in Iraq, shares his story about persevering and thriving in spite of trauma and tragedy, to raise awareness about post-traumatic stress disorder.



Ingenuity Turns Older Space into “iSpace”

Taking an innovative approach to reinventing its former American Center of Information Resources (ACIR), the embassy in Tbilisi created “iSpace,” or Innovation Space, a center that supports programming for local and distant supports programming for local and distant regions in Georgia through digital outreach. Among the results of the redesign and refocus, is that the iSpace is regarded as a source of innovative, relevant programming, leading to a 156 percent increase in program participants from the previous year. The iSpace has also attracted an increase in “whole-of-mission” use. For example, the embassy’s political and economic section hosts a regular economic working group, a gathering of Tbilisi’s leading entrepreneurs, in the iSpace.

Broad Partnership Provides Free Entrepreneurship Training for Women

In an excellent example of cross-department and private-sector partnership, the Office of American Spaces joined with the Thunderbird Business School of Arizona State University, the State Department's Office for Global Women's Issues, the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs to offer Dreambuilder, a free online business training program for women.

Available in English and Spanish, Dreambuilder leads aspiring women entrepreneurs through the steps of starting a business. From marketing and accounting to managing risk and obtaining funding, participants build their business acumen, finishing the course with a complete business plan and the confidence to implement it.



Program Evaluation How to Measure Success

As important as assessing the effectiveness of American Spaces is assessing the quality of the programming they provide. Working with the Regional Public Engagement Specialists, the Office of American Spaces will assist embassies and American Spaces in understanding how to evaluate the effectiveness of programs taking place in American Spaces.

Training for Network Management Taking a Global Focus on a Local Level

Looking ahead to American Spaces staff training, the advanced course will continue to refine its focus on networked American Spaces but also on developing networks and partnerships of all types. Emphasis will

be on local staff, with a possible shorter course for foreign service officers who manage American Spaces. More single-country workshops will help meet training demand and reach those whose English skills are not strong enough for a globally attended course.

The current American Spaces training program began in 2015 based on the concept of implementing a centrally planned curriculum across all American Spaces to ensure consistency across the globe in direction, tools and resources. To that end, all sessions, regardless of location, were open to anyone.

Through the continual refining of the PY351 and 352 agendas, significant progress in targeted U.S. foreign policy programming has been made since 2015.

Wall graphics are major components of modern American Spaces designs. Students at the American Space in Vilnius, Lithuania, present the U.S. Capitol.



2017 Budget For the Office of American Spaces

The Office of American Spaces received 513 requests for 2017 support funding. Requests from Priority American Spaces totaled \$8.7 million (51%). The requests were broken down by categories: strategic programming, technology, media, look and feel, building expenses and staffing. Due to an emphasis on strategic programming, a noticeable increase occurred for proposals in this area.

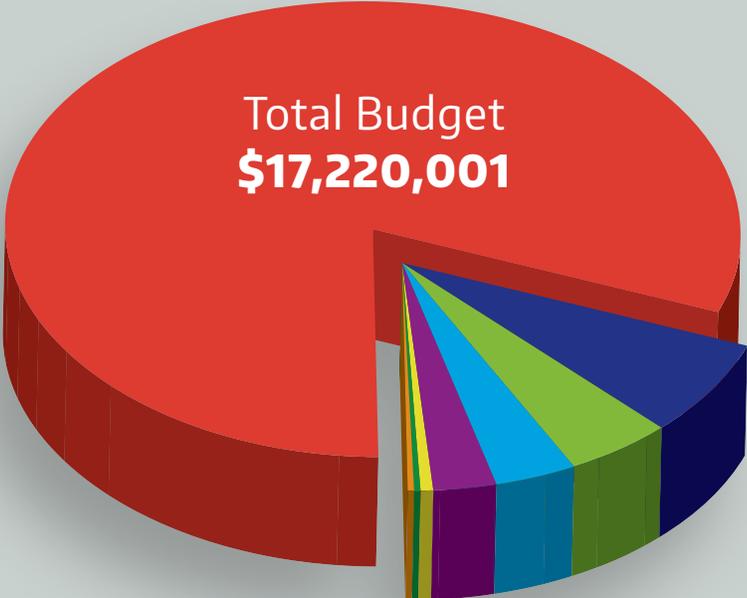
Technology remained a sizeable portion of requests due to ongoing needs to upgrade devices and equipment. In many locations, especially where unfettered access to the internet is available only at American Spaces, internet service is an ongoing need. Media included

print and film resources, primarily. Look and Feel included furnishings, wall graphics, etc.

The American Spaces Support Fund was initiated in 2012 in recognition of the unique opportunity American Spaces provide to reach foreign audiences through direct person-to-person engagement on key foreign policy topics. The Office of American Spaces was founded in part for the purpose of distributing this fund. Total funding for American Spaces comes from several sources, including the six geographic bureaus, embassies and consulates and the office of Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.



Students huddle at the Kathmandu, Nepal, Innovation Hub, a technology and program American Space featuring 3,000 square feet of open space, plus auditorium, meeting and other program space. The Hub offers free WiFi and a resource collection focused on creativity and entrepreneurship, including a business incubator.



American Spaces
\$13,728,945

Regional Public Engagement Specialists
Travel and Vienna Staff Operating Costs
\$1,251,262

Programming Materials & Support
\$821,938

Training
\$777,535

Smithsonian Contract
\$478,170

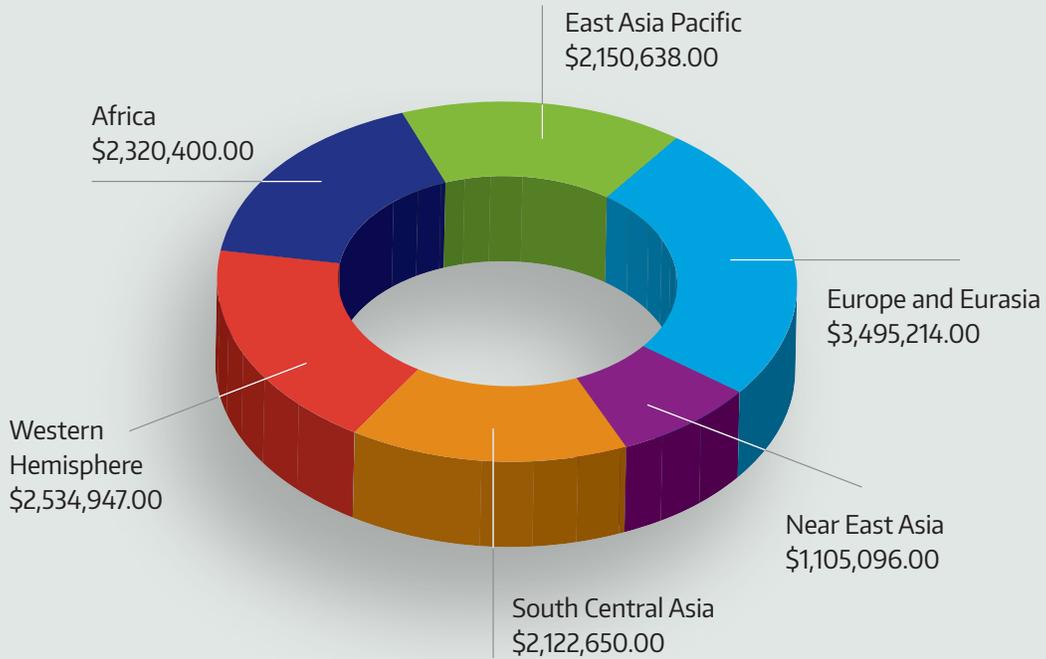
Contract staff
\$84,900

DC based staff travel
\$47,174

Office Administration
\$30,077

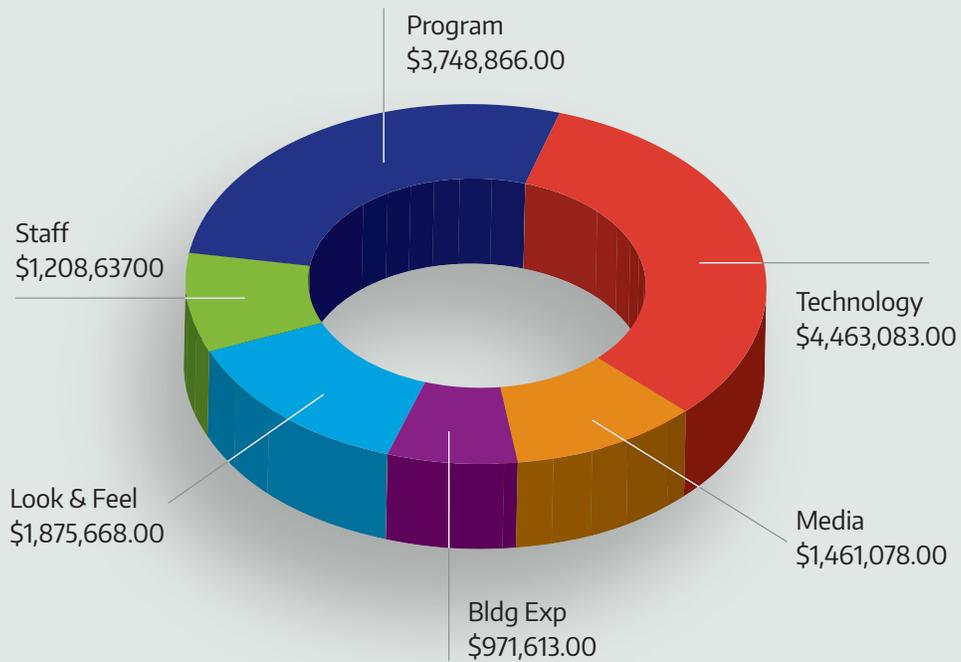
American Spaces Support Funding by Region

Total \$13,728,945.00



American Spaces Support Funding by Category

Total \$13,728,945.00



Afghanistan Brings Visitors to the United States, Virtually

Working in a difficult public outreach environment inspires innovation, and Afghanistan is an excellent example.

The embassy has developed a series of virtual programs, which, when implemented through its nationwide network of American Spaces, known as Lincoln Learning Centers, enables live, interactive and creative connections with young people – the key target audience.

Taking advantage of high-speed internet connections in the centers, the embassy runs virtual tours of the United States. A tour guide in the U.S. broadcasts live from a smartphone, and viewers can ask questions and even suggest where the guide should go. Guides use fun, engaging activities and work in policy-relevant themes.

Tours include a walk and a bike ride through New York, a college campus tour, a walk through a typical U.S. home, a visit to the Smithsonian Museum of American History and a hike through a national park.

Offering audiences the ability to directly experience the U.S. in a live, interactive way, the tours have also inspired American Spaces to give each other virtual tours of their home cities. One such exchange occurred between the American Spaces in Afghanistan and Tajikistan.



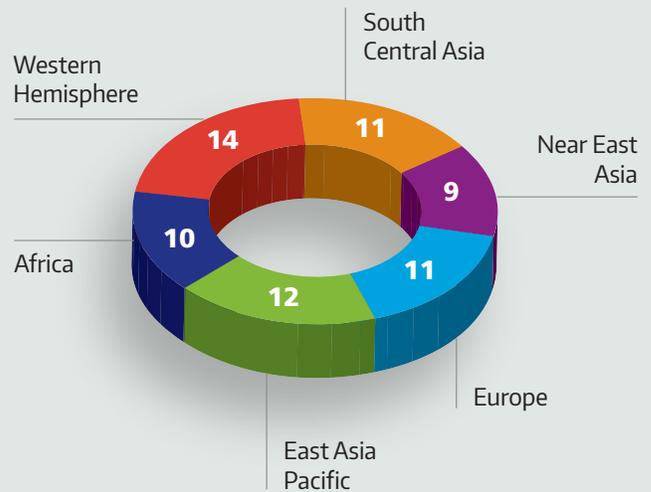
Priority American Spaces = 67 Strategic Public Diplomacy Investments

In 2014, the Office of American Spaces and the regional bureaus teamed to align investment in American Spaces with policy priorities by designating certain American Spaces as “high priority.” In 2016, the original list was reviewed and revised slightly.

Priority American Spaces are defined as those that each regional bureau deems to be the most strategic locations where an American Space is needed, beyond all other public diplomacy tools, to further foreign policy goals.

Developing and sustaining the Priority American Spaces as high-quality strategic engagement platforms remains a primary focus of the Office of American Spaces. Priority American Spaces continue to be eligible for higher funding, particularly for staffing and renovation.

Number of Priority American Spaces by Region



2017 Statistics For American Spaces



58,928,831
Visitors



44,188,726
Visitors who
attended programs



2,539,286
Programs

105
American
Centers*

443
American
Corners

111
Binational
Centers

659
American
Spaces

The number of American Spaces visits in 2017 dramatically increased by 54 percent, to 58,241,107. Each American Spaces visit cost the U.S. government roughly 95 cents, which represents an extraordinary national security value. The most cost-effective American Spaces model is partnership with foreign institutions – 84 percent of American Spaces operate as partnerships (443 American Corners, and 111 Binational Centers). These American Spaces provide significant value to the U.S. government, as they generally come with rent-free space and no-cost staff.

Using public-private partnerships to host American Spaces represents conscious planning to employ the more expensive U.S. government-operated model – the larger American Centers – in environments where public engagement must happen at a U.S. diplomatic facility due to host government information controls. American Centers are the smallest group of American Spaces at 105 (18 leased, 87 owned). Prior to rebranding of Information Resource Centers, there were about 35 American Centers. Typically, these are larger spaces with the most resources, and many are off embassy compounds.

* Including recently re-designated IRCs

Cross-Department Collaboration: OBO

In 2016, in collaboration with the Office of Overseas Buildings Operations, the Office of American Spaces issued the first-ever department-wide Open Access Principles. The purpose was to address security barriers to achieving U.S. public diplomacy objectives in U.S. government-operated American Spaces within embassy borders.

Open access includes access to uncensored information on the internet. However, some U.S. government-operated American Spaces report that a recent ban on personal electronic devices has had a chilling effect. The Office of American Spaces has been monitoring the impact.

Going forward, the Office of American Spaces is working with OBO to revise its American Spaces plans to include modern designs, WiFi, and to require clearance by the Office of American Spaces.



“ Public diplomacy activities are the nuts and bolts that form the bedrock of America's diplomatic presence and potential around the world. Without a continuous and public face, negotiations become far more difficult, especially in building support for an agreement among the local citizenry.

– Shawn Powers

Valuing Public Diplomacy, November 2017
Contributor, USC Center on Public Diplomacy
Executive Director, U.S. Advisory
Commission on Public Diplomacy

World Press Freedom Day Fosters Connection in Southeast Asia

American Spaces in Malaysia, Indonesia and Burma facilitated a two-day virtual digital citizenship program on topics including the impact of social media on news literacy and how to apply media literacy concepts in today's society. A professor of broadcast and digital journalism at Stony Brook University led the workshops for teacher trainees, faculty members, university students and young professionals using digital tools, including Google Hangout and Skype.

IRC = American Center New Role for an Outdated Concept

A 1990s movement toward web-based services inspired a new name for the American libraries around the world: Information Resource Centers. Security concerns pushed many onto embassy compounds and closed them to the public, but they continued providing web-based services.

The forced absorption of off-compound American Spaces into embassy compounds under the 1999 Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act (SECCA) presented significant challenges for public

diplomacy engagement. In recent years, the Office of American Spaces has been modernizing the IRCs and helping them return to their roots as places of in-person interaction, where possible.

To that end, the Office of American Spaces re-branded all publicly accessible Information Resource Centers as “American Centers” – the name for American Spaces that are owned or operated by the U.S government. The Office of American Spaces is working with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) to update design specifications for these spaces, and to incorporate Open Access Principles to the extent possible.



American Spaces in Pictures The Power of Human Connection

For this year's annual report, the Office of American Spaces held a contest challenging American Spaces around the world to submit some of their best photos from the past year. The response was overwhelming, but even more astounding is the visual impact of what happens in the roughly 650 American Spaces around the world. When it comes to testimony of the power of face-to-face public diplomacy, pictures speak louder than words.

— The Editor





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of American Spaces
Bureau of International Information Programs
SA-5, 2200 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

americanspaces@state.gov
<https://americanspaces.state.gov/>



Editor: Sonya F. Weakley